

Just Politics

Democratic governance: The missing millennium development goal



Just Politics means democratic governance

The essentials for
gender-responsive
democratic governance

The most marginalised
must participate in
decision-making
processes

Organising

Alliance building

Capacity building

Strengthening local and
national governance

Civil society advocacy
and lobbying: local,
national, regional and
international

Resource allocation

Democratic governance happens when governments work with their citizens, when institutions and laws reflect and respond to the needs of the poorest and most excluded, when people are able to articulate their needs and participate effectively in politics. Only when governance is inclusive can it be truly democratic.

In One World Action we believe that the Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved without democratic governance. We therefore work with some of the most socially excluded and marginalised groups in Africa, Asia and Latin America so that they can engage and transform the institutions and processes that keep them poor and powerless. Through our partners, we provide information and mobilise resources to equip and involve communities in decision-making and to influence, capture and expand political spaces.

Front cover image:
Indigenous women members of Tierra Viva
marching to protest against gender-based
political violence and demanding a safer
political environment to encourage women's
participation, Sololá, Guatemala

What we do:
Key areas of our governance work

Promoting democratic local, national and regional governance

Transparency, accountability and responsiveness are central to democratic governance and these are best demanded by an informed and robust civil society. To promote democratic governance, it is essential to build the capacity of civil society for meaningful civic engagement. This goes beyond promoting public sector reform and focuses on creating safe spaces for people to participate in and build the capacity and willingness of civil society to effectively engage within these spaces.



One World Action supports the Urban Poverty Network at the provincial level to engage with government ministries in Angola through the Luanda Urban Poverty Programme. The network brings together civil society organisations working on urban poverty and has created the space for dialogue through the National Urban Forum for them to engage with national government.

After the Marcos dictatorship fell in the Philippines in 1986, the Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD) in the Philippines sought to maximize and broaden the newly opened up democratic local and national political space by strengthening the capacity of people's organisations and social movements to participate in various spheres of governance. One World Action supports IPD's work in coordinating the Citizen Participation in Local Governance (CPLG). The CPLG is a programme in Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines and Cambodia which enhances citizens' capabilities to engage in local governance.

One World Action is also actively involved in the People's Health Movement and Asia Europe People's Forum processes and encourages and supports the strengthening and widening of political spaces at all levels in which people can engage.

A vegetable vendor who is a member of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) one of India's largest membership organisations with more than a million members, using the market space that SEWA had negotiated for with local authorities, to improve her livelihood, Indore, India

Advancing women's political participation

Women's full participation in political life is the only guarantee that their rights will be protected and upheld. We believe that when women are involved in politics, their voices and views are heard. Economic and social decisions will then be directly informed and influenced by women's needs. However, women face many barriers that prevent them from participating fully and meaningfully in politics. These include cultural stereotypes, social barriers, the threat of violence and a lack of confidence and resources. Our partners work with organisations at all levels to increase and support the political participation of women.

One World Action supports the Association of Women Councillors of Bolivia (ACOBOL) through a programme which aims to strengthen the capacities of women standing for office and those already in office, in the areas of legislation and equitable municipal administration. The programme is a unique forum for women from all political parties to confront challenges that face them as politicians, especially the gender-based political violence that is prevalent in Bolivia.

With One World Action's support the Honduras Centre for Women's Studies (CEM-H) works on reforming public policies and national legislation, education and training for women's leadership and the promotion of women's political participation. CEM-H supports women MPs in the National Assembly's Commission on Women to take forward national gender policies and legislative reform on women's rights.

One World Action also supports the National Women's Lobbies in Malawi and Zambia to provide civic and rights education for poor and marginalised women and girls to enable them to participate in politics. With this support, women and girls strengthen their presence and influence in elections, and in local and national decision-making structures. They are also better able to demand improved basic services and accountability from elected representatives.



Members of community organisations, village officials and representatives of local government, engaged in joint participatory community-level development planning, Centre for Participatory Governance, Cebu, The Philippines



Rosa Salgado, Ombudsperson for Disabled People's Rights, joining other colleagues in demanding the implementation of the UN Convention on Disabled People's Rights, Managua, Nicaragua



Moni Rani Das, Coordinator of the Dalit Women Forum, speaking out against the violence and oppression faced by Dalit women and urging them to come together and demand their rights from the government, Mirpur, Bangladesh

Supporting the poorest and most excluded

We know from experience that unless those who have been excluded from decision-making processes are included, discrimination and injustice will persist. Women, Dalits, people with HIV/AIDS, disabled people, indigenous people etc. are some of those who have been traditionally excluded and marginalised. Supporting them to participate in formal and informal politics enables them to better hold their governments to account, to ensure their needs and interests are addressed and their human rights respected. Our partners work with some of the most excluded women and men in countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.



One World Action supports the Bangladesh Dalit Human Rights Organisation (BDHR) through the Citizens Initiative (Nagorik Uddyog) to organise Dalit people in Bangladesh to campaign against the discrimination that they face and to demand their rights from the government. Nagorik Uddyog works for democracy at the grassroots level and lobbies for accountable institutions. They support marginalised women and men to understand and exercise their rights and to improve their access to justice by reforming the informal justice systems that exist at the community level.

The Ombudsperson for Disabled People's Rights in Nicaragua was mandated by the Nicaraguan Government in 2005 after sustained lobbying from some of One World Action's partners and their allies. The office of the Ombudsperson advocates for the rights of disabled people with the central government and state institutions, monitors human rights violations against them and supports legal action taken by disabled people.

MANET+ is the only national network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) in Malawi. With One World Action's support MANET+ provides practical support to PLHIV, carries out advocacy for the greater involvement of PLHIV in all decisions that affect their lives and lobbies government and donors for earmarked funds to address the needs of PLHIV.

The Coalition of Women living with HIV/AIDS have united and strengthened themselves to resist stigma and intimidation from political parties so that they can participate effectively in political decision-making processes that affect their lives, Lilongwe, Malawi

Influencing EU and UK policy and practice on governance, gender and social exclusion

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the European Union have developed strong policy documents on governance and development. These policies understand the importance of citizen-state accountability and engaging with the most socially excluded women and men. They see clear linkages between good governance, respect for human rights and equality. However, more needs to be done to translate policy rhetoric into practice.

One World Action and our partners will continue to press for the implementation of these policies. We will pay particular attention to how the European Union and DFID mainstream governance, gender and social inclusion in all their development interventions and policies. We will aspire to keep donor policies dynamic by bringing in new ideas, developments and innovative ways for people to improve and strengthen their engagements with the state.

One World Action supports the Voices, Influence and Access (VIA) project in six southern African countries and contributes to raising the awareness levels of small rural farming communities on the links between international trade policies and their lives and livelihoods. The project has been instrumental in strengthening and building their capacity to influence trade policy in their respective countries.

One World Action also works with partners in four southern African countries to coordinate the Just Budgets project which examines how gender budget analysis can be used to ensure that donors and governments meet their gender equality policy commitments and proposes how citizens can be more involved in tracking gender commitments within aid processes.

We believe that networking helps to amplify our voice and build support for issues that are important to our partners and ourselves. Networking also enables peer learning and sharing. We are active members of BOND (British Overseas NGOs for Development), the Gender and Development Network, WIDE (Women in Development Europe) and CONCORD (European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development). Networking is one of our key strategies to ensure that governance, gender, women's rights and social exclusion issues remain high in the priorities of policy makers.



Top:
One World Action's partners from Latin America, Africa and Asia in dialogue with Joan Ruddock, MP, on the challenges facing women participating in politics, House of Commons, UK

Above left:
The Asia Europe People's Forum (AEPF) enables people of both regions to influence policy on Asia-Europe relations at the national, regional and inter-regional levels. Participants at an AEPF strategy meeting, Quezon City, Philippines



Above right:
Partners of the VIA project in Southern Africa meeting with EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson, to share the impact of EU trade policies in the region, Brussels, Belgium

More women more power

The 'Just Politics Agenda for More Women in Politics' is a set of recommendations summarising strategies, approaches and tools for enabling women's transformative political participation and leadership. One World Action hopes that these recommendations will inform future lobbying and advocacy carried out by women's groups, feminist movements and civil society organisations in South and North. The Agenda will be part of One World Action's 'More Women More Power' campaign.

The Agenda was developed by forty participants from fifteen different countries who in November 2007 participated in a unique dialogue in London 'Just Politics: Women Transforming Political Spaces'. The event brought together regional, national and local government officials, civil society representatives, grassroots colleagues, women's rights advocacy workers, activists, academics, journalists and One World Action staff.

Rural women's organisation members trained by Women for Change in their civic rights, discussing the success of their woman candidate in the local election, Madzubuka, Zambia

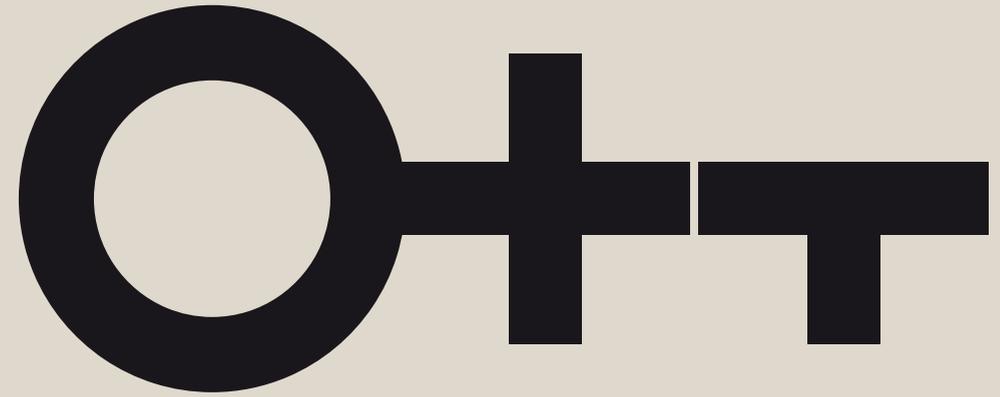


It has been 30 years since the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was agreed. Almost all governments worldwide have ratified CEDAW thereby committing to taking action to end discrimination, but progress on women's rights is slow and reversible.

Article 7 of CEDAW says that all States who ratify the Convention shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

- a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies
- b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government
- c) To participate in non-governmental organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country

The Just Politics agenda for more women in politics



We recommend that national and donor governments along with southern and northern civil society work together to enable, support and strengthen the political participation of women by:

1

Addressing barriers to the political participation of women

- Re-defining politics with women in the centre and changing the political culture
- Developing policies and programmes that improve women's economic status
- Ending all forms of violence against women, but in particular gender-based political violence
- Challenging attitudes and power relations which associate women disproportionately with responsibility for domestic work and caring responsibilities
- Implementing policies that promote gender equity
- Promoting women from different backgrounds as leaders

2

Enabling women to participate in political life

- Supporting women to become aware of their rights and of their role in politics
- Encouraging women to become involved in political activities at the local, national, regional and international levels
- Supporting women to develop the tools needed to make their voices heard
- Maintaining robust and diverse women's and feminist groups to lead the way
- Developing, maintaining and adequately funding government and civil society's local, national, regional and international women's organisations and institutes

3

Increasing women's representation in formal politics

- Promoting the notion of 50+ (half or more) representation of women in politics
- Reforming internal party legislation and national electoral legislation to promote women's candidatures and enforcing sanctions for non-compliance
- Promoting affirmative actions such as proportional representation systems and electoral gender quotas and enforcing sanctions for non-compliance
- Initiating advocacy to maintain pressure on government and political parties to democratise and support the role of women in politics

4

Supporting women to be effective political actors

- Training and mentoring new women representatives
- Creating alliances and networks of women and men representatives, both within and between parties, to unite around gender issues and to share information
- Identifying and supporting progressive women and men gender champions who are in politics to engage more with women's and feminist organisations
- Contesting negative or stereotypical portrayals of women and women politicians in the media
- Supporting local women's groups to lobby and support elected women once they are in power to keep the focus on the women's agenda

5

Maximising accountability to women

- Women's and feminist organisations ensuring accountability by monitoring progress on gender equity targets and holding governments accountable to international human rights and gender equity agreements
- Using voters' or women's manifestos and the media to hold parties accountable for election promises
- 'Naming and shaming' to highlight the issue of corruption which seriously hinders women's political participation
- Lobbying for increased transparency, wider consultation, greater accountability and more effective gender analysis in all decision-making especially in trade and aid
- Developing and using appropriate indicators to measure progress on gender equity goals

One World Action aims to support and promote innovative and accountable relationships between the most socially excluded people and their governments. Our experience shows that this leads to policies and the allocation of resources to address the needs and rights of the poorest and most marginalised, contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

“We need to work not just with governments, but also with citizens and civil society. In many societies, women have less power over their lives than men. Reducing poverty means helping them get their rights, helping them hold officials to account and enabling them to engage in the political process.”

DFID White Paper ‘Making Governance Work for the Poor’
July 2006

“More direct efforts to strengthen democratic processes, and in particular political parties and the electoral process, are planned in a number of countries, as are measures to facilitate access to justice...”

EU Communication on ‘Governance in the European Consensus on Development’
COM (2006) 421

For further information on One World Action’s Just Politics work, visit our website at www.oneworldaction.org or contact our Governance Policy Coordinator tbrace-john@oneworldaction.org

The Just Politics programme is funded through our Programme Partnership Agreement with the Department for International Development, UK.